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Mr. Warren Clamps On The Lid

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With one unjudicious statement, Chief Justice Earl Warren has undone much of the good that, it was hoped, would come of the official inquiry into the Kennedy assassination. What made him do it is beyond understanding. He could hardly have done more harm.

The Chief Justice's remarks came shortly after Marina Oswald, widow of the accused assassin, appeared before the investigating commission that Mr. Warren heads. After testifying, Mrs. Oswald was spirited away under guard. Reporters, barred from the witness, sought out the Chief Justice.

Mr. Warren refused to disclose testimony taken during the secret session. In that he acted quite properly. But then he uttered this damaging obiter dictum: Mrs. Oswald's testimony, he said, "may not be released in your lifetime." Any part that affects the national security, he said, may be suppressed for decades, "and I say that seriously."

One can only imagine the hosannas that must have shaken the offices of The Worker when the Communist Party faithful got the word. If Mr. Warren reads The Worker (and let it be said that we are not among those who think he necessarily does), he knows how serious a mistake he made. Every issue of that communist publication since the assassination has endeavored to forge a link between Oswald and our government.

"Clippings from Newspapers on

Oswald's (sic) Link U. S. Agencies," proclaimed a Worker headline on January 19.

"Why has the government, or the CIA, remained silent on a story . . . that Oswald went to the Soviet Union as a secret anti-Soviet agent?" asked the December 17 Worker.

"Mrs. Oswald could possibly throw light on much reported evidence of (sic) her husband was an informer for the FBI, or was in some other undercover service for one of the State Department's agencies," said the January 5 Worker.

The Communists knew, of course, that these slanders were living on borrowed time. The report of the Warren commission, truthful, candid and factual, was bound to snuff them out in due time. But now along comes the Chief Justice, prattling about the national security and plans for suppressing the truth for decades, if not forever.

His remarks were made to order. National security, in the Communist lexicon, means CIA, FBI and State Department. Suppressing facts means you have something to hide. Ergo, Oswald was a paid government agent.

When Mr. Warren was named to head the special board of inquiry, the selection met with much acclaim. Mr. Warren, it was said, was widely respected. His word would never be questioned. More's the pity. It appears that Mr. Warren's off-hand remarks, like some of his more formal utterances, would have been better left unsaid.